



# ODW Now

MARCH 2026

## Highlights

- World Water Day ▶p2
- Translations ▶p3
- Job Postings Page ▶p3
- Free Cybersecurity Webinar ▶p3
- Design Corner ▶p4-5
- Contact Updates ▶p5
- Backflow Incidents ▶p6
- Lead and Copper Rule ▶p7

## Notable Dates

- World Water Day 3/22
- Cybersecurity Webinar 5/13
- Next DWAG meeting 6/1

## Connections

- [The Office of Drinking Water Newsletter](#)
- [SIGN UP](#) to get this in your inbox!
- [Find Contacts and Staff in Your Area](#)
- [Drinking Water Home Page](#)

## Get Ready for Spring!

As warmer weather arrives, some water systems reopen after their winter closure. Seasonal water systems completely depressurize for one or more months during the year. These system operators or owners should begin their startup procedures at least one month before the plan to serve water to customers.

You should use this time to evaluate the condition of your water system, make repairs, disinfect, and ensure the water system is free of coliform bacteria by collecting an investigative bacteria sample.

To comply with requirements, each seasonal water system must:

- ◆ **Follow an approved-by-us start-up procedure.** Our [Seasonal Water System Start-Up Procedure Certification Form 331-560 \(Word\)](#) meets the start-up procedure requirement.
- ◆ **Send us a signed and dated start-up procedure certification form,** declaring that you followed the procedure upon start up and prior to serving water to the public.
- ◆ **Provide the certification form to your nearest ODW office.**
  - [ERO.coli@doh.wa.gov](mailto:ERO.coli@doh.wa.gov)
  - [NWRO.coli@doh.wa.gov](mailto:NWRO.coli@doh.wa.gov)
  - [SWRO.coli@doh.wa.gov](mailto:SWRO.coli@doh.wa.gov)

### Additional Information

- ◆ [Startup Procedures for Seasonal Noncommunity Water Systems 331-310 \(PDF\).](#)
- ◆ [Startup and Shutdown Assistance for Seasonal Noncommunity Water Systems webpage.](#) 



# World Water Day—March 22, 2026

## Water and Gender: “Where Water Flows, Equality Grows.”

Since 1993, the United Nations has observed World Water Day, focusing on the importance of fresh water and sustainable management of water resources. Each year highlights a different pressing global water issue.

The 2026 theme, Water and Gender: “Where Water Flows, Equality Grows,” emphasizes the critical relationship between access to safe, clean water and gender equality. While water challenges affect entire communities, they do not affect everyone in those communities equally.

## The Global Reality

Around the world, billions of people still lack safely managed drinking water and sanitation services. In many regions, when water is not available in or near the home, women and girls are primarily responsible for collecting it. They may walk long distances—sometimes multiple times a day—to meet basic household needs such as cooking, washing, and sanitation.

This responsibility often comes at a significant cost. Time spent procuring water reduces opportunities for education, income generation, civic participation, and rest. Girls may miss school. Women may have fewer opportunities to pursue economic advancement and improve their family’s lives.

In addition, journeys to fetch water can expose women and girls to safety risks, including violence, harassment, and trafficking. When water is unsafe, they are frequently tasked with caring for family members who become ill.

Where access to safe drinking water and sanitation are lacking, inequalities deepen. When water access improves, opportunities expand—not only for individuals, but for entire communities.

## Why Gender Matters in Water Solutions

The United Nations’ key messages for 2026 underscore that solving the global water crisis requires more than infrastructure. It requires inclusive leadership and equitable decision-making.

- ◆ The global water crisis affects everyone—but not equally. Women and girls disproportionately bear the consequences of inadequate water and sanitation services.
- ◆ Women must help shape the future of water. Climate-resilient water systems must meet diverse community needs, and that requires women’s voices, expertise, and leadership at every level.
- ◆ When women and girls participate equally in water governance and planning, services are more inclusive, sustainable, and effective.

Investing in women’s leadership in the water sector strengthens institutions, improves outcomes, and builds more resilient communities.

## Reflecting on Our Work

In the United States, many of us work in systems where safe, reliable drinking water is expected and consistently delivered. Yet even here, water equity remains an important consideration.

## Questions for Reflection

- ◆ Who participates in water decision-making processes in our communities?
- ◆ Are diverse voices represented in leadership roles within the water sector?
- ◆ How do we support the next generation of water professionals—especially women entering engineering, operations, and leadership roles?

As professionals committed to public health, we play a role not only in providing safe water, but in shaping a sector that is inclusive, resilient, and forward-looking. We encourage women waterworks professionals through our [Operator Certification program](#). In fact, several Washington women have won [Drinking Water Week](#) awards for their outstanding contributions to our state’s drinking water industry.

Our [Drinking Water State Revolving Fund \(DWSRF\) Disadvantaged Communities \(DAC\) program](#) focuses on communities that are challenged with contaminants, aging infrastructure, and other difficulties. We can offer additional subsidy to some projects serving challenged communities and increase their water reliability and safety.

## How You Can Engage

World Water Day offers opportunities to:

- ◆ Share information about global water challenges with colleagues and community partners.
- ◆ Highlight the contributions of women in your organization or local water systems.
- ◆ Encourage mentorship and professional development opportunities for women in water industry careers.
- ◆ Participate in discussions about equity and inclusion within the water sector.

To learn more about the 2026 theme, explore educational resources, or download the [World Water Day Activation Kit](#), visit the [United Nations World Water Day website](#). 💧



Photo credit: UN Photo/Gwenn Dubourthoumieu

# Lost in Translation? Not on Our Watch!

## Helping water systems meet multilingual public notice requirements and reach every customer.

Washington is a diverse state. About 19.6 percent of residents live in a household where a language other than English is spoken and roughly 7.8 percent have limited English proficiency. That means many customers may not receive critical drinking water information unless it's provided in a language they understand.

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, systems must meet multilingual requirements when issuing public notices (CRF 141.205 (2)). Public notices must either:

- ◆ Include information in the appropriate language(s) explaining the importance of the notice, or
- ◆ Provide a phone number or address where customers can request translated copies or language assistance.

To support water systems, we continue expanding translated resources. Our website includes [public notice templates translated into the top five languages](#) spoken in Washington.



We also provide [drinking water warning statements translated into 27 languages](#), including:

- ◆ "This report contains important information about your drinking water. Have someone translate it for you or speak with someone who understands it."
- ◆ "Boil your water before using."
- ◆ "Don't drink the water."
- ◆ "Children under 12 months old should not drink the water. Don't use the water to make formula."

We regularly update our website and publications to reflect Washington's changing population. Please check our website and publication database for the latest translated resources. 💧

# Looking for Your Next Waterworks Operator Job— or Your Next Great Hire?



Our [Job Postings webpage](#) connects certified operators with water systems across Washington. Whether you're ready for a new opportunity or searching for qualified talent, it's a great place to start.

Have a position to fill? Complete the [Recruitment Announcement Application 331-748 \(Word\)](#) and email it to [dwopecert@doh.wa.gov](mailto:dwopecert@doh.wa.gov) to have your open job position posted.

While we don't endorse specific water systems, utilities, or organizations, we're proud to provide a central place to help employers and operators connect. 💧

## ZOOM ONLINE WEBINAR: LEARN ABOUT EPA'S FREE CYBERSECURITY ASSESSMENTS FOR DRINKING WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

**May 13, 2026, at 10:00 AM Pacific Time** [Zoom Meeting Registration Link](#)

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is hosting a webinar to highlight the free cybersecurity assessments EPA provides to water and wastewater systems to identify cybersecurity vulnerabilities and develop a plan to strengthen their cyber defenses. Topics include an overview of the cybersecurity evaluation program, tips on how utilities can prepare for an assessment, benefits of conducting a cybersecurity assessment, and testimonials from utilities that have received a cybersecurity assessment from EPA to provide insight on how the assessment has helped improve their cyber resilience. [Register HERE for this webinar.](#) 💧

# Funding Your Next Infrastructure Project: A Guide to Construction Loan Funding

## Applying to DWSRF? Need an approved planning document first? Here are some tips to help make the process as smooth as possible.

Applying for a Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Construction Loan requires a current, approved water system planning document that contains information on the project you are applying for. Plans must be approved by ODW staff and water system governing bodies prior to the application deadline of November 30.

Our planning team's goal is to work with you to meet this deadline, giving as many water systems as possible the opportunity to apply for funding.

We prioritize reviews seeking funding eligibility, but *we cannot guarantee approval by the application deadline.* The following dates are general guidelines for submittal.

- ◆ WSPs by January 1.
- ◆ SWSMP by March 1.
- ◆ WSP amendments by June 1.

## Tips for Quick Approval

### Tip 1: Provide a Complete Submittal

When we receive a submittal, we go through an intake process to determine if it is complete before we accept it for review. Follow your preplan checklist as closely as possible. Your submittal must include:

- ◆ [Project Approval Application Form 331-149 \(Word\)](#).
- ◆ **A cover letter specifying the plan is for DWSRF eligibility.** Make sure to explain which project(s) the system is applying for and when.
- ◆ **A copy of your preplan checklist.** When you include page numbers on your checklist indicating where in your draft document each requirement is addressed, it helps speed up our review.
- ◆ **Signed and dated PE stamp** for WSPs and WSP amendments.
- ◆ **Water Rights Self-Assessment Form** for [WSPs 331-372-F \(Word\)](#) and [SWSMPs 331-370-F \(Word\)](#).
- ◆ **Capacity Analysis Worksheet 4-1** (or an equivalent from the [Water System Design Manual \(WSDM\) 331-123 \(PDF\)](#). Applicable to all WSPs. Applicable to WSP amendments and SWSMPs if determined at the preplan).
- ◆ **Service area and facilities map(s).**
- ◆ **Generally complete draft.** For WSPs, a nine-chapter format (or similar), for SWSMPs, a four-chapter format, with

information provided in each chapter. We will not accept submittals with blank chapters.

### Tip 2: Timely and Thorough Response to Draft Comments

The most effective way to shorten the review process is to shorten the amount of time between draft reviews. Address every comment. Reach out to your county-assigned planner and engineer if you have questions on how to address comments. Provide a comment response form or a letter explaining how you addressed each comment and where.

### Tip 3: Prepare in Advance for Public Meetings and Governing Body Approvals.

Public meeting requirements are a critical part of plan approval and, if not scheduled in advance or documented correctly, can delay plan approval. All municipal water suppliers must hold a [Water Use Efficiency](#) (WUE) public forum and formally adopt WUE goals. All WSPs and WSP amendments must include an informational meeting for water system consumers and formally adopt the WSP or amendment. Please ensure you follow these steps.

- ◆ **Document notification.** Document the meeting date and time, how plans can be viewed, and how comments can be made. The [WUE public forum](#) must be advertised to the public at least 14 days prior to the meeting.
- ◆ **Address each item separately.** The WUE public forum, WUE goal adoption, WSP informational meeting, and WSP adoption are separate agenda items.
- ◆ **Provide meeting materials, sign-in sheets, and/or approved meeting minutes.** Documentation must show the public/consumers were given the opportunity to provide comments, and document any comments received.



◆ **Formal adoption of the WUE goals.** Provide the approved meeting minutes and/or signed resolution. The documentation must show the governing body adopted the goals word-for-word as presented in the planning draft.

• **Bonus Tip:** We recommend adopting WUE goals after the first draft has been reviewed to confirm goals meet WUE requirements.

◆ **Document formal adoption of the WSP or WSP amendment.** Wait for us to confirm the plan is ready for approval. When ready, adopt and provide the approved meeting minutes and/or signed resolution.

• **Note that if the system approves minutes in subsequent meetings, copies of both minutes are required to document approval.**

• **Bonus Tip:** Plan ahead!  
The November 30 DWSRF deadline occurs right after the Thanksgiving holiday. Many governing bodies hold fewer meetings in November because of holidays. Make sure public meetings and formal adoptions are scheduled well in advance, allowing for minutes and resolutions to be approved and provided to us before November 30. Communicate your proposed schedule with your planner.

◆ You must have an **ODW issued** approval letter in your DWSRF application by November 30. Our staff are out of office for Thanksgiving Thursday *and* Friday. **We need**

all documentation turned in at least five business days before November 30 to get you an approval letter on time.

#### Tip 4: Ensure Financial Viability of Your System.

◆ **Financial information.** WAC 246-290-100 requires systems to demonstrate financial viability as part of water system planning. This includes detailed summaries of income and expenses, a balanced operational budget for the plan approval period, and a plan for collecting revenue to maintain cash flow stability, as well as fund capital improvements, build reserves, and respond to emergencies. Water rates must be set at levels that provide full cost recovery for the operations of the water system and should be structured to encourage water conservation. These foundational requirements are the basis for DWSRF fiscal eligibility review and underwriting of loan applications to determine if a water system can manage and repay a loan, as well as maintain adequate funding to provide for operations and maintenance and build reserves. If you have questions or would like further information or technical assistance, please contact the DWSRF team through the Technical Assistance Request Form.

General information and contact information for DWSRF is located on our [Drinking Water State Revolving Fund webpage](#). ◆

## Pipeline Update: Staff and Contact Changes

Over the last few years, we have experienced many changes in the Office of Drinking Water, including:

- ◆ New organizational structure.
- ◆ Staff retirements.
- ◆ Many new faces.

Over 50 percent of ODW staff joined the office within the last six years.

All these changes may make you feel like you no longer know who to contact for help or support. To make your life easier, [we updated our webpage contacts](#). You can easily find the right person to contact in any situation.

We updated our org chart as a [functional organization chart](#) so that you can understand how we are organized by programs. We also provide two ways to identify specific contacts based on the county you are in. Just use our [contacts by county webpage](#) or our [Interactive County Contact Map 331-784 \(PDF\)](#) to find who to contact.

If you are still not sure who to contact, call our main line, 360-236-3100, and we will direct you to the correct staff member. ◆



## Drinking Water Advisory Group (DWAG) June 1, 2026, Meeting

We hold all our meetings through Microsoft Teams video, so you can join our meeting with your computer, laptop, tablet, or phone from wherever you are. **You can find the Teams links and meeting agenda on our [DWAG Meeting webpage](#).** After the meeting we post any handouts or presentations and, within a month, we post the meeting notes.

Do you want to receive advance notice of meetings and their agendas? [Join our advisory group email list](#).

Do you have questions or topics you want to discuss? Email [John Freitag](#) or [DWInfo@doh.wa.gov](#) with your ideas and questions. ◆

# Cross Connections: Backflow Gone Bad

Backflow incidents are required to be reported to us (246-290-480(8)(g)). While only a few backflow incidents were reported in 2025, it is possible that not all incidents were reported appropriately. A backflow incident is when water flows in the reverse direction and can cause contaminants to enter the potable drinking water system through cross-connections of unpotable water with potable water.

One of the backflow incidents reported is a common occurrence that may happen every fall, when irrigation systems are prepared for winter. The process of connecting an air compressor to push water out of the irrigation system can inadvertently push irrigation water along with the air back into a resident's drinking water plumbing or even into the distribution system if it is not connected properly.

## Backflow Incident Reported Last Fall

A homeowner called the city to report discolored water and air coming from their kitchen sink. It started about an hour after they heard an air compressor running outside. Both the homeowner and the neighbor had Double Check Valve Assemblies (DCVA) installed. City workers checked the area and found that the homeowner's sprinkler system had just been blown out for winter. Sprinkler systems are blown out in the fall to keep the pipes from freezing. But the air compressor was connected on the wrong side of the DCVA. City workers came out and tested the customer's backflow device, flushed the distribution system in the area with three nearby hydrants, and collected a bacteria water sample. The next day, the results came back negative—no bacteria detected, and everything was clear.

## Irrigation System Backflow

The second example also involved an irrigation system. However, in this example, a plumber was hired to find a way to increase water pressure to the irrigation system.

This backflow incident was discovered when city personnel reported a water meter spinning backwards for a

four-story apartment complex. This apartment complex has two separate lines: domestic potable water, and irrigation water. The irrigation system has a booster pump in the basement of the building to get water to a rooftop terrace. A plumber was hired since the water pressure on the irrigation system did not have adequate water pressure to maintain the garden terrace.

The plumber inadvertently created a cross-connection between the domestic potable water line and the non-potable irrigation service line. The cross-connection pressurized the irrigation water through the booster pump into the drinking water system. As a result, the mixed irrigation and domestic potable water flowed back into the main potable distribution system serving the public drinking water supply. The cross-connection bypassed the domestic backflow assembly installed for the apartment complex. City personnel shut the water off to the apartment building and had the property manager hire a plumber to repair the cross-connection and separate the domestic and irrigation plumbing. The city took proper actions to ensure the public water system was safe to drink after the incident by testing the backflow assembly, taking bacteria water samples, and flushing the water system.

## Regulations and Codes

Public education and uniform plumbing code, along with state WAC 246-290-490 can help keep our water safe to drink. The prevention of incidents of cross-connections to occur is a on-going effort to ensure bacteria and contaminants don't enter the drinking water system. Fortunately, these two examples didn't cause any injury or illness, yet it is still possible for a licensed plumber or a well-intended person to cause a backflow incident. Through public education and supporting our Cross-Connection Specialist we can minimize risk from cross-connections. 💧



# Lead and Copper Rule Improvements

We are working through the adoption process for the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI). While our policy team is assessing the new rule and has not yet formally adopted it, we can provide the following upcoming requirements and tentative deadlines.

## July 1, 2026

- ◆ [LSLI Consumer Notice Certification 331-776 \(Word\)](#) for systems with lead, unknown and GRR service lines (due annually).

## December 1, 2026

- ◆ Consumer Notifications for customers served by lead, GRR and unknown service lines.
- Due annually until the inventory no longer has lead, GRR, or unknown service lines.
- Find guidance and templates on our [Lead Service Line Inventory webpage](#).

## November 1, 2027

- ◆ [Baseline Inventory due \(EPA PDF\)](#).
- Builds on the initial inventory due October 16, 2024, but must also include information on connectors (lead, non-lead, unknown and no connector present), as well as any updates and new information on the initial inventory.
- ◆ [Lead Service Line Replacement Plan due \(EPA PDF\)](#).
- Required for any water system with at least one lead, GRR or unknown service line.
- [Calculating Service Line Replacements \(EPA PDF\)](#).
- ◆ [List of schools and childcare facilities due \(EPA PDF\)](#).
- ◆ [Updated Public Education Requirements begin \(EPA PDF\)](#).
- ◆ Lowered Lead Action Levels:
  - Changes from 0.015 mg/L to 0.010 mg/L.

## January 1, 2028

- ◆ [Tap sampling site plan due \(EPA PDF\)](#).
- ◆ Updated Tap Sampling Procedures must be submitted to us.



- ◆ [Changes in Tap Monitoring Requirements \(EPA PDF\)](#).
- Revised tiering criteria for sampling locations.
- Additional fifth liter sample required for systems with lead service line.
- ◆ Some systems return to collecting a standard number of samples semi-annually.
- Systems with lead or GRR.
- Systems that exceeded the revised lead action level of 0.010 mg/L **or** the copper action level of 1.3 mg/L in their most recent tap sampling period.

We are also updating our Predictive Modeling/Statistical Analysis guidance to better align with the final LCRI. The revision will give clearer guidance on classifying service lines, including LSL and GRR. We will include information about adding connector status and materials to the upcoming baseline inventory. We encourage water systems to thoroughly classify service lines, especially LSL and GRR, as upcoming replacement plan funding opportunities for public water systems may depend on the amounts of reported lead and GRR. 💧

---

Please share this newsletter with anyone who might be interested. [Sign up for future issues.](#)

[Read ODW Now online.](#)



To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email [doh.information@doh.wa.gov](mailto:doh.information@doh.wa.gov). If in need of translation services, call 1-800-525-0127.